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The American School Superintendency 1982 A Summary Report

By Luvern L. Cunningham
and Joseph T. Hentges

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Foreword

School administrators provide leadership for our nation's most essential industry ... education. That is why the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) has recently produced a number of valuable publications in the "Superintendent Career Development Series" and the "Administrative Team Career Development Series."

AASA's concern about the status of the school administration profession has existed since the association was founded in 1865. That concern prompted *The Status of the Superintendent*, a special research report published in 1923. With the exception of the 1940s, the study has been conducted each decade since. *The American Superintendency 1982 ... A Summary Report* makes it possible to examine more closely the evolving issues which affect administrators, study the roadblocks that might inhibit effectiveness and explore what administrators feel they need to know to be successful. Of course, there is much more, as you will discover as you read this unique publication.

This report was prepared for AASA by a special research team at The Ohio State University. That team was headed by Luvern L. Cunningham, Novice G. Fawcett Professor of Educational Administration, College of Education and Senior Faculty, Mershon Center at Ohio State and Joseph T. Hentges, Graduate Research Associate, Academic Faculty of

Educational Administration, College of Education at Ohio State. Hentges now serves as Superintendent of Schools in Cannon Falls, Minnesota.

The American Superintendency 1982 ... A Summary Report is a representative study of all superintendents. The sample used in conducting the study was weighted to offset the possible effects of characteristics influencing certain groups, such as large, small, rural, urban or suburban school districts. Therefore, survey results found in this publication will not necessarily duplicate other studies of a similar nature.

AASA's Committee for the Advancement of School Administration (CASA) commissioned this study through a grant from the Spencer Foundation and has reviewed survey results. This Summary Report has been prepared to enable the association to share highlights of the complete study with greater numbers of people.

Paul B. Salmon, Ed.D
Executive Director

Introduction

For nearly 60 years, the American school superintendency has undergone close scrutiny, not only in the eyes of the public, but also in the eyes of researchers. Approximately once every decade, beginning in 1923, a major study has tried to analyze the status and characteristics that together make up this demanding, but important position in society.

The 1982 study by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) continued the tradition begun by the Department of Superintendence in the National Education Association. That first study defined as its purpose:

> To determine wisely what measures should be taken to improve the professional status of the city superintendent of schools, it is of first importance that information regarding his present status be gathered. Upon this information as a basis a program for improvement can be built.

Following up on this original study, subsequent reports were released in 1933, 1952, 1960 and 1971. The 1940–41 study was interrupted by World War II.

Collectively, these studies reflect the content and flavor of changes that have occurred during the past six decades. A degree of consistency exists even though each of the studies has some unique features. Sampling techniques, superintendents' titles and data covered have varied.

The 1923 study, *The Status of the Superintendent*, for example, focused on city superintendents from seven enrollment strata. The report focused on men and appeared to be addressed to men, evidenced by the use of male pronouns and the word "men" throughout the report.

Ten years later, the survey was expanded to include rural superintendents. *Educational Leadership*, the 1933 yearbook of the Department of Superintendence, reported separately on city and rural superintendents and delved into new areas of information. The 1933 report highlighted the emergence of the United States as a world power, the economic depression, modernization of industry, advancements in medical sciences and the need for economic growth stimulated by better education. Special attention was given to educational leadership in a dynamic civilization.

The first study conducted by AASA was released in 1952 and was entitled, *The American School Superintendency*. Separate chapters reported survey findings on city and rural superintendents. New topics addressed in the study included inservice professional education, leadership at the state level, blocks to effective leadership and the organization of the superintendency. Trends in society that had meaning for education were also reviewed. The need for leadership was emphasized in nearly every chapter, as it was in 1933. The 1952 report reflected the times ... even more than the first two survey reports.

The 1960 study, *Profile of the School Superintendent*, was modest in comparison to earlier studies. The survey results were also included in the 38th yearbook of the association, *Professional Administrators for America's Schools*. Urban school superintendents were the subjects of the study. That report, the last published as part of the yearbook series, gave little emphasis to the external conditions affecting the lives of chief school administrators. More emphasis was placed on their professional preparation for the job. The final chapter began on a note of optimism. "As a whole, the school has become a more comprehensive, an increasingly effective, clearly essential social institution." It appears unusual that no note was taken of the impact of Sputnik or the significance of the Civil Rights movement on the decade of the '50s.

The Commission on the Preparation of Professional

School Administrators abandoned, for the 1971 survey, the practice of reporting separate profiles for city and rural superintendents (1933, 1950) or focusing on city superintendents only (1923, 1960). The 1971 report consisted of two companion volumes, *The American School Superintendent*, and *Preparation for the American School Superintendency*. Some comparisons between 1971 and 1982 data are included in this report.

Study Design

The 1982 study was undertaken to help develop a more comprehensive and reliable assessment of the profile of the superintendency as the nation enters the decade of the 1980s.

The questionnaire used in the 1982 study varied considerably from the instrument used in 1971. Prime focus was placed on maintaining comparability with earlier studies and retaining items of current saliency while introducing new questions of contemporary values. The survey was expanded to include such topical areas as:

- School board-superintendent-community relationships,
- Perceptions of self-fulfillment,
- Evaluation,
- Staffing patterns.

Great care was taken to assure input from a variety of groups in the development of survey instrument.

The scope of the questionnaire went beyond typical status studies to provide significant information useful to those now serving as superintendents, persons preparing to be superintendents, boards of education seeking to employ and evaluate superintendents, institutions with preparation programs, the leadership of AASA and educational researchers.

Sampling Techniques

Decisions about the sample were based upon: the need to draw comparisons with samples used in previous studies; the desire to include selected subsamples of women and other minorities in the superintendent population; and interest in obtaining feedback from chief school administrators of intermediate school districts.

A stratified, selected sample of 2,533 public school superintendents from **all** United States school systems during 1980–81 was chosen from the AASA's computerized listings. *The sample was derived from a universe of all school systems and was not restricted to the membership of the American Association of School Administrators.* The sample was based on a stratification by student enrollment in each district and not on civilian population. The sample was stratified into five major categories, as follows:

- Group A—superintendents in school districts with student enrollments of 25,000 or more.
- Group B—superintendents in school districts with student enrollments from 3,000 to 24,999.
- Group C—superintendents in districts with student enrollments from 300 to 2,999.
- Group D—superintendents in districts with fewer than 300 students
- Group E—chief school administrators of intermediate school districts including county school districts, joint vocational schools, educational service units and similar districts known by a wide variety of titles.

The total number of superintendents in the population from which the sample for the 1982 study was drawn was 15,214. That universe included general superintendents (chief executive officers) and chief officers for intermediate school districts, but for the sake of convenience, the term "superintendent" has been used. Table 1 shows the number and percentage of superintendents in each category who received and returned the 1982 questionnaires.

The samples described in Table 1 include a special subsample of all of the female general superintendents across the country. The importance of including this special sample is the result of the heightened interest in the number of women who serve as school superintendents compared to the 1970s. Women superintendents are still outnumbered by male superintendents by approximately 82 to 1.

Of all the local school superintendents in the United States, more than 2,000 received questionnaires. Of those, more than half (57.1 percent) responded. Thus, nearly 10 percent of all school superintendents are included. The

overall response rate, as well as those for the subsamples, are considered to be adequate by some survey research experts, good to excellent by others.

In developing the 1982 national profile for the American School Superintendent, the data were analyzed in two ways. First, a National Unweighted Profile was computed based on the raw data from respondents. It is possible, however, for differences in sample sizes and the number of respondents in the various categories of superintendents to influence unduly the raw data and result in a skewed picture of the superintendency. Therefore, a National Weighted Profile was computed which took into account statistically the differences in sample size of the four enrollment strata for general superintendents as well as the percentage of respondents in each stratum. The National Weighted Profile provides a more accurate description of American school superintendents and permits more valuable comparisons between the 1982 data and the weighted profile developed for the 1971 study.

Table 1.
1982 Survey Sampling

	Public School Superintendents						
	Included in each enrollment group		Receiving questionnaires		Returning questionnaires		Weights assigned
Pupil enrollment Classification	Number	Percent of total supts.	Number sampled	Percent sampled in each group	Number	Percent of those sampled	for National Profile
Group A: 25,000 or more enrolled	189	1.3%	189	100.0%	113	59.8%	0.1576
Group B: 3,000 to 24,999 pupils	3360	23.6%	698	20.8%	403	57.7%	0.7830
Group C: 300 to 2,999 pupils	8040	56.4%	892	11.1%	593	66.5%	1.2730
Group D: less than 300 enrolled	2671	18.7%	563	21.1%	230	40.6%	1.0902
Totals:	14,260	100.0%	2,342	16.4%	1,339	57.1%	
Intermediate Superintendents	954	100.0%	191	20.0%	76	39.8%	

Part 1: The 1982 Profile

The American Superintendency, 1982, is both a profile of the American public school superintendent and a commentary upon the superintendency. Data are included about staffing patterns, school board-superintendent relationships, personnel and other issues. Of course, the "average" superintendent or superintendency does not exist. However, common characteristics can be determined by computing means and medians.

Embedded within this report are profiles of six categories of superintendents:

- **one for each of the four groups of general superintendents** based on the size of district enrollments;
- **one for the intermediate unit superintendents;** and
- **one for the female superintendents.**

Identifying all minority superintendents, other than women superintendents, was not possible. Therefore, minority groups have not been analyzed as a special subsample. However, some data, based on minority superintendent respondents, are included. For the most part, this report is limited to the National Weighted Profile of general superintendents. Some comparisons among the various categories of superintendents have been drawn, especially if the contrasts were sharp and the differences appeared to be important.

Personal Characteristics

American school superintendents continue to be overwhelmingly white and male. Until 1971, no statistics were gathered on sex, race or ethnicity of superintendents. The percentages of females and minorities remain virtually unchanged compared to 10 years ago. In 1982, 1.2 percent are female and 2.1 percent are minority. Of the minorities, 0.8 percent are Black, 0.8 percent are Chicano/Hispanic, 0.2 percent are Native American (Indian/Eskimo), 0.1 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.2 percent are classified as "other." (Other recent surveys show slightly different percentages, but most differences can be attributed to statistical errors and chance.)

Age

The average ages of superintendents have fluctuated over the years. The median age was 43.1 in 1923, rose to 51.8 in 1960 and in 1982, was 48.7 (National Weighted Profile). Table 2 shows the ages by district enrollment sizes. Predictably, the younger superintendents are in smaller districts, the older superintendents in larger districts.

Table 2
Superintendents' Ages

	Weighted Profile	Group A		Group B		Group C		Group D		Unweighted Profile	
	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Under 35	4.0	0	0.0	1	0.3	18	3.0	27	12.1	46	3.5
35–39	12.5	5	4.5	24	6.0	70	11.8	52	23.2	151	11.4
40–44	16.7	15	13.4	55	13.8	108	18.2	36	16.1	214	16.1
45–49	20.4	24	21.4	88	22.1	128	21.6	33	14.7	273	20.6
50–54	23.7	29	25.9	121	30.3	132	22.3	43	19.2	305	24.5
55–59	17.1	31	27.7	83	20.8	107	18.1	19	8.5	240	18.1
60–64	4.8	7	6.3	24	6.0	27	4.6	9	4.0	67	5.0
65+	0.8	1	0.9	3	0.8	2	0.3	5	2.2	11	0.8
Total	100%	112	50.8	399	50.5	592	47.5	224	44.8	1327	100%
Not Reporting		1		4		1		6		12	
Mean	48.0										48.5
Median	48.7										49.2

Group A—25,000 or more students; **Group B**—3,000 to 24,999 students; **Group C**—300 to 2,999 students; **Group D**—Less than 300 students.

Community Background

In previous studies, superintendents were more often than not from small, rural communities. That picture is changing somewhat, with some growth in the numbers from suburban and large cities. The trend is not strong, however. Superintendents may continue to be from rural and small town backgrounds.

Marital Status

Statistics on marital status were gathered for the first time in 1982. The 1923 report contained no data on marriage but did have considerable material on the number of superintendents' dependents. The single reference to marital status indicated that the city superintendent was as a rule, married. In 1982, according to the National Weighted Profile:

- 91.9 percent are married
- 4.17 percent are divorced or separated
- 2.7 percent are single
- 1.3 percent are widowed

Parents' Education

An astonishing difference exists between the levels of educational attainment of superintendents and their parents. (See Table 3.) In general, superintendents are well educated, highly-trained professionals. Although their accomplishments may parallel teachers, lawyers, social workers, doctors and other professionals, the contrasts between superintendents and their parents are stark and reflect the American emphasis upon education as a key to success.

Table 3
Education of Superintendents' Parents (National Weighted Profile)

Levels	Fathers	Mothers
	(in percents)	
Did not complete elementary school	17.8	9.9
Completed elementary school	39.9	34.8
Graduated from high school	17.3	28.8
Some college	10.0	13.1
Graduated from college	6.2	8.6
Graduate or professional school	5.4	2.9
Technical or trade school	2.3	1.3
Don't know	1.1	0.8

Standard of Living

The early 1980s brought speculation that the standard of living of today's children and youth, when they become adults, will be lower than that of their parents. Superintendents do not see it that way, at least as far as their own children are concerned (See Table 4.) But they do see sharp contrasts between their standard of living and that of their parents.

Superintendents are among few professionals in the country who have speculated about potential shifts in standard of living between their generation and the next and have experienced such a remarkable upward mobility themselves.

Table 4
Superintendents' Views of Their Standard of Living (National Weighted Profile)

Superintendents'	Comparison with Their Parents'	Comparison with Childrens' Projected
Higher than	87.2	8.8
Same as	11.2	39.3
Lower than	1.6	42.9
Could not judge	0.0	9.0

Table 5
Political Party Preferences of Superintendents

	Weighted Profile	Group A		Group B		Group C		Group D		Unweighted Profile	
	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Democrat	30.9	41	36.9	114	28.6	193	32.7	63	28.3	411	31.0
Independent	33.3	40	36.0	142	35.6	201	34.0	63	28.3	446	33.7
Republican	35.2	30	27.0	140	35.1	196	33.2	94	42.2	460	34.7
Other		0	0.0	3	0.8	1	0.2	3	1.3	7	0.5
Total		111		399		591		223		1324	
Not Reporting		2		4		2		7		15	

Group A—25,000 or more students; **Group B**—3,000 to 24,999 students; **Group C**—300 to 2,999 students; **Group D**—Less than 300 students.

Political Party Preference

For the first time in the six national surveys, superintendents were asked to declare their political party preference. (See Table 5.) Conversations with superintendents about this matter indicate that party participation, identification and membership are subject to change over time, vary according to local, state or national elections and do not necessarily reflect voting behavior. Consequently, these data must be considered as indicative only of general political preference.

Examined independently, female superintendents express stronger preferences for Democrats (42.7 percent) and less for the Republicans (28.7 percent) and Independents (29.2 percent) than the national weighted sample. Also of interest, the smaller district superintendents indicate a propensity toward Republican political party preference. Democratic or Independent orientations are more likely to exist in the larger district superintendencies.

Career Information and Professional Activities

Career Milestones

The age structure of an occupation or profession has significance for personnel policy and for planning of preparation programs. In this section, data are reported concerning age upon entry into teaching, entry into the initial administrative or supervisory position, the point when a decision was reached to seek the superintendency, and appointment to the first superintendency. (See Table 6, next page.)

Almost 16 percent of superintendents decided to enter the superintendency by age 25, and 20 percent actually entered the superintendency before they were 30. Those assuming their positions while under 30 started in small districts, often in rural areas. More than three fourths became superintendents before they reached 40. For many, administrative career decisions were made after brief periods of experience as teachers and, for a small number, even before they entered professional education.

The age at which superintendents begin their educational careers has not varied a great deal from 10 years ago. (See

Table 6
Significant Career Milestones
(National Weighted Profile)

Ages	Entry Into Teaching	Entry Into Administration/ Supervision (in percents)	Decision To Become A Superintendent	Entry Into Superintendency
Under 20	3.6	0.3	2.8	0.0
20–21	22.3	1.1	2.0	0.5
22–23	30.0	2.4	2.7	0.6
24–25	21.0	9.8	8.2	2.9
26–27	13.4	18.0	8.4	5.0
28–29	5.5	18.8	10.8	11.3
30–34	3.5	31.3	22.7	30.1
35–39	1.2	12.4	19.4	27.3
40–44	0.6	3.6	12.1	12.4
45–49	0.4	1.6	6.5	6.6
50–60	0.0	1.0	4.3	2.8
Over 60	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2
Mean (age)	23.9	30.4	33.2	35.2
Median (age)	23.1	29.5	31.9	34.4

Table 7.) During the first third of this century, persons could enter teaching while in their teens with only high school training. As certification requirements increased, the entry age increased. After World War II, large numbers of veterans entered teaching. Since they were somewhat older than non-veterans, the entry age into teaching during the late 1940s and early 1950s was slightly higher.

Table 7
Decision Points for Superintendents
(National Weighted Profile)

Decision Points	1982	1971
	(in years)	
Entry into teaching	23.1	23.0
Entry into first administrative or supervising position	29.5	29.0
Decision to enter the superintendency	31.9	N/A
Entry into the superintendency	34.46	36.2

The median age for entry into an administrative or supervisory position was 29.5 in 1982, 30.4 in 1971 and 27.5 in 1960. In 1982, entry into the superintendency occurred at about age 34; in 1971 the median entry age was 36. The 1982 sample included all female superintendents which raises the median age slightly. The median age was 41.5 for females and 34.5 for males.

Superintendents were also asked at what age they decided to become superintendents. The median was 31.9 years of age.

In summary, today's superintendents entered education at about age 23, took their first administrative or supervisory position at just before age 30, decided to become a superintendent at about age 32 and achieved their first superintendency approximately two years later when they were 34 years old.

Experience Prior to the Superintendency

Today's superintendents, in contrast with the past:

- Have more experience in jobs outside of education;
- Reflect more experience in elementary schools;
- Evidence a shift away from teaching experience in social studies and coaching athletics;
- Evidence a shift toward teaching experience in mathematics, English, drama and journalism;
- Have slightly less overall classroom teaching experience.

The nature of extra-curricular responsibilities has changed over the past decade. In 1971, 79.1 percent of the superintendents had coached athletics, in 1982, 42.3 percent. More of today's superintendents have had responsibility for class sponsorship, music, yearbooks and school newspapers. In all, 95.1 percent have had extra-curricular duties as teachers.

There have been some shifts in the first administrative or supervisory positions prior to the superintendency. (See Table 8, next page.) Ten years ago, most superintendents started their administrative or supervisory careers as principals. Fifty-two percent still start that way, but fewer than in the past, with a corresponding increase in the number who begin as assistant principals.

Table 8
First Administrative or Supervisory Position (National Weighted Profile)

	1982	1971
	(in percents)	
Assistant principal	18.9	11.2
Principal	55.7	59.1
Supervisor	5.0	3.1
Director	5.2	3.5
Assistant superintendent	2.6	2.4
State department of education	0.9	N/A
Other	11.7	20.8

The career patterns, the positions or combinations of positions held on the way to the superintendency, are of interest to persons anticipating administrative careers in education. (See Table 9.) These patterns are also of significance to those who design and administer training programs. The percentages of those who follow the teacher-principal route to the superintendency have declined. Meanwhile, percentages of those who have taken the teacher-principal-central office pathway have increased. Over the years, some persons have stepped directly from the classroom or the principal's office into the superintendency. Many of those moves have occurred in smaller school districts.

Only 8.3 percent of the superintendents have spent their

Table 9
Experience Prior to the Superintendency (National Weighted Profile)

Career Pattern	1982	1971
	(in percents)	
Teacher only	8.8	14.1
Principal only	5.8	2.4
Central office only	1.1	0.4
Teacher and principal	37.2	58.4
Principal and central office	3.5	0.3
Teacher, principal and central office	30.2	16.5
Other	5.9	0.0

entire professional careers in one school district, indicating considerable movement between and among school districts prior to assuming the superintendency.

Once persons are certificated they may seek a job as superintendent. More than 9 percent actively sought their first superintendency for five or more years before they landed a position. Approximately 59 percent, however, were in superintendencies less than one year after being certificated; 12.7 percent took a year; 10.6 percent required two years; 5.2 percent three years; and 3.3 percent four years.

Getting the Job

Why do superintendents believe they were hired for their present positions? More than two thirds attribute their selection to their personal characteristics and qualifications. They believe their hiring was based on:

- Personal characteristics and qualifications 66.6 percent
- A person to solve specific problems 16.0 percent
- A person to achieve a specific program improvement 11.4 percent
- To maintain the status quo 4.0 percent
- Other 2.0 percent

The prominence of personal characteristics or qualifications as the reason for getting the job points to the presence of ego strength in superintendents. However, that strength is needed if the responsibilities inherent in the office are to be fulfilled satisfactorily.

Here are some additional data, based on the National Weighted Profile, that characterize the superintendency in 1982:

- 88.2 percent are appointed, 11.7 percent are elected.
- The average length of superintendents' contracts or letters of appointment is 2.6 years.
- The median number of years in the superintendency is 7.6, down from 8.3 in 1971.
- The median number of superintendencies held is 1.3.
- Little interstate movement occurring: 1.1 states is the median.
- 38 percent are "insiders," 62 percent are "outsiders."

Researchers in the past have been interested in whether superintendents are appointed or elected from inside or outside their districts. Richard Carlson of the University of Oregon, in the early 1960s, studied career patterns of superintendents focusing upon this variable. His conclusion was that "insiders" are often elevated to superintendencies when things are going well and the status quo is to be maintained. "Outsiders" are often chosen when things are not going well or change is needed. Of course, availability of the appropriate person internally is also a factor.

Work Load

It may come as a surprise to today's superintendents, but the hours superintendents report that they invest in their jobs has been going down slightly in recent decades. In 1952, superintendents said they worked 58 hours per week at their jobs. In 1971 it was 56.1 hours and in 1982, 54.8 hours. These figures include evenings and weekends.

Local district superintendents work an average of 2.6 evenings per week, plus 1.7 Saturdays and 0.9 Sundays per month. The average for intermediate district superintendents is 48.5 hours per week, seven hours less than their colleagues in local districts. Intermediate district superintendents also work less on weekends and work fewer evenings, according to survey results.

Factors Inhibiting Effectiveness

The superintendency is a demanding position. Most people acknowledge its challenge and significance. In 1971 and 1982, superintendents were asked to choose from a list of 15 factors, two that most constrained their effectiveness. The respondents could write in additional factors. In 1982, the top six most constraining factors were:

- Inadequate financing of schools — 41.3 percent
- Too many insignificant demands upon the superintendent — 34.2 percent
- Lack of time — 22.8 percent
- Collective bargaining — 16.7 percent
- Too much added responsibility — 12.3 percent
- Inexperienced, unqualified, or ill-prepared staff members — 7.9 percent

In 1971, the top six were:

• Inadequate financing of schools	35.8 percent
• Too many insignificant demands upon the superintendent	33.2 percent
• Inexperienced, unqualified, or ill-prepared staff members	23.3 percent
• Limits on personal or professional capabilities	23.1 percent
• Lack of time/too much added responsibility	21.7 percent
• Too many controls placed on the superintendent	16.0 percent

The percents do not total 100 because superintendents could choose two factors.

During the decade, "inadequate financing" and "too many insignificant demands" were the two factors that most inhibited effectiveness. "Collective bargaining" and "difficulty in relations with board members" (ranked tenth) have moved up in prominence. "Limits on personal and professional capabilities" and "too many controls placed on the superintendent" dropped out of the top six.

Thirty-two percent reported that they felt they were most effective in their immediate years of service, but slightly more (32.8 percent) said their best years were ahead. About 14 percent identified their middle years as best and slightly more than 8 percent their early years.

Attitudes Toward the Superintendency

Superintendents who have held more than one superintendency were asked why they left their last position. "Promotion and money" was cited by 48.2 percent; "change of location, type of district, position" 24.3 percent; and "conflict with the board" 11.0 percent. Slightly more than 4 percent said being "fired, or the threat of being fired" was their reason for moving.

"If you had to do it all over again what career would you choose?" This question has been asked in the past, and was included again in 1982. (See Table 10, next page.)

Table 10
Careers Superintendents Would Choose (National Weighted Profile)

Career Choice	1982	1971
	(in percents)	
School superintendent	54.6	71.4
Another educational administration or supervisory position	4.0	9.7
Classroom teacher	1.7	1.5
Guidance counselor	1.0	2.3
College professor	3.6	3.0
A position outside the field of education	26.7	12.2
Other	1.3	0.0
Don't know	7.1	0.0

Most professionals are conscious of how their profession is viewed, both from the point of its status and prestige. During the past 10 years, superintendents have changed somewhat how they feel about the status/prestige of the superintendency. More superintendents in 1982 than 10 years ago believed that it is decreasing in status and prestige; fewer believe that it is increasing in status and prestige; and more indicate that it is remaining about the same as 10 years ago. (See Table 11.)

The attractiveness of the superintendency (and other educational careers) seems to have slipped substantially in the minds of superintendents. Almost 17 percent fewer would choose the superintendency again and double the percentage of a decade ago would leave the field of education. These findings are difficult to interpret. One conclusion

Table 11
Superintendents' Perceptions of their Status/Prestige (National Weighted Profile)

Status/Prestige	1982	1971
	(in percents)	
Decreasing in importance and influence	25.0	14.8
Remaining about the same as 10 years ago	47.0	35.5
Increasing in importance and influence	22.9	49.8
Don't know	0.0	5.0

might be that the superintendency has diminished status and prestige, is a hard, thankless job and is not all that well paid. Another interpretation is that superintendents are well educated and reasonably well trained and now qualify for important positions outside of the field.

Professional Socialization

Several opinions were sought in 1982 which bear upon professional socialization including a question about discriminatory hiring and promotional practices as a problem in limiting administrative career opportunities for women and minorities. (See Table 12.)

Table 12
Discrimination Problems for Women and Minorities

	Women (in percents)			Minorities (in percents)		
Degree of Discrimination	Weighted Profile	Male Supts	Female Supts	Weighted Profile	Male Supts	Female Supts
Major problem	14.4	12.2	43.3	15.6	15.0	32.7
Minor problem	39.6	41.6	37.5	45.4	45.3	50.5
Little or no problem	46.0	46.1	19.2	38.9	39.6	16.8

The responses of female superintendents are included in Table 12 for comparative purposes. It is clear that males and females see discrimination in hiring and promotion practices quite differently. Additional questions pertained to the superintendents' role in encouraging and recruiting women and other minorities to enter educational administration as a career. (See Table 13, next page.) Again, males and females differ substantially in their responses.

These results are rather surprising in a period when so much emphasis has been placed on the rights of women and minorities. The fact that there are many single-race districts may explain in part the number who indicate that they do not actively recruit minorities into administration. The findings in regard to women are more difficult to understand and might be attributed to either a lack of sensitivity and aware-

Table 13
Recruitment and Encouragement of Women and Minorities

	Weighted Profile		Male Respondents (in percents)		Female Respondents	
	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
Recruit Women:	66.3	33.7	66.9	30.7	85.4	12.5
Recruit other minorities	50.9	49.1	52.7	44.0	65.6	30.2

ness or widespread discrimination, although other factors could cause the same results.

Several questions were asked about mentoring and networks. (See Table 14.) A paradox of sorts is found in these results. Two thirds of the superintendents consider themselves as mentors; over three fourths report that others come to them for career advice; and nearly 60 percent say that they have enjoyed the help of a mentor along the way. On the other hand, they seem to disclaim any association with an "old boy" or "old girl" network in advancing their careers or in employing other administrators. Variances in these re-

Table 14
Mentoring and "old boy/old girl" Networks

Survey Questions	Weighted Profile			Males			Females		
	Yes	No	Don't Know	Yes	No	Don't Know	Yes	No	Don't Know
				(in percents)					
Do you consider yourself to be a mentor?	68.2	16.0	15.8	69.1	15.4	15.5	74.5	10.8	14.7
Do others come to you for career advice?	77.3	17.6	5.1	79.6	15.9	4.5	80.0	15.2	4.8
Do you have/had a mentor?	58.8	34.7	6.5	60.6	33.0	6.4	63.7	31.4	4.9
Has the "old boy/old girl" network been effective in advancing your career?	12.3	60.8	26.9	11.7	62.2	26.1	22.8	60.4	16.8
Have you utilized the "old boy/old girl" network in employing administrators?	11.0	88.9	0.1	10.7	89.3		24.5	75.5	

sponses might be explained by a lack of clarity in the meaning of these terms.

Memberships in Professional Organizations

The survey identified memberships held by superintendents in various professional organizations. The results are of importance to AASA and to other groups. (See Table 15.)

Table 15
Memberships in Professional Organizations (National Weighted Profile)

Organizations	1982 (in percent)	1971 (in percent)
American Association of School Administrators (AASA)	66.0	76.7
National Education Association (NEA)	9.9	63.8
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)	3.4	18.6*
National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)	3.4	
Association of School Business Officials (ASBO)	8.3	1.5
Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development (ASCD)	18.9	13.5
State Professional Association(s)	86.9	N/A
Other	22.1	36.8

*NASSP and NAESP data was combined in 1971

AASA remains the dominant professional organization for school administrators. While there has been some drop in the percentage of superintendents in AASA and the national principals' organizations, the percentage with NEA membership has dropped sharply. It is likely that many of those that are active in NEA are life members.

The increase in ASBO membership might correspond with the theme throughout the survey of problems of school finance and business management. Similarly, a revived interest in instructional management throughout the country may explain the slight increase in ASCD membership.

The recent study of AASA members showed higher participation in professional organizations. (See Table 16 on the next page for the relationship between district size and professional membership.)

Table 16
Memberships in Professional Organizations by Size of District

Organizations	Weighted Profile Percent	Group A No.	Group A Percent	Group B No.	Group B Percent	Group C No.	Group C Percent	Group D No.	Group D Percent	Unweighted Profile No.	Unweighted Profile Percent
AASA	66.0	99	88.4	336	84.4	399	67.5	81	36.5	915	69.2
NEA	9.9	18	16.1	59	14.8	50	8.5	17	7.7	144	10.9
NASSP	7.4	15	13.4	37	9.3	40	6.8	14	6.3	106	8.0
ASBO	8.3	8	7.1	28	7.0	54	9.1	17	7.7	107	8.1
ASCD	18.9	28	25.0	95	23.9	119	20.1	19	8.6	261	19.7
NAESP	3.4	6	5.4	14	3.5	14	2.4	14	6.3	48	3.6
State	86.9	96	85.7	360	90.5	533	90.2	161	72.5	1150	86.9
Other	22.1	30	26.8	103	25.9	118	20.0	52	23.4	303	22.9
Total		112		398		591		222		1323	
Not Reporting		1		5		2		8		16	

Group A—25,000 or more students; **Group B**—3,000 to 24,999 students; **Group C**—300 to 2,999 students; **Group D**—Less than 300 students:

Board/Superintendent/Community Relationships

In 1982, new questions were included in the survey regarding school boards and the community. Many have expressed interest, for example, in the length of time board members serve. Similarly, the topic of board member turnover is often discussed. The 1982 data indicate that the median length of service of present board members is five years, with a range of service from one to twenty years. Fewer than 4 percent are appointed, which has been consistent over the years. Of the 96 percent who are elected, most are chosen at-large. The average size of boards is just under seven members with an average of 1.6 females per board and 4.8 males. The ethnic representation, in average number of members, is: 6.1 white, 0.19 black, 0.08 Hispanic, 0.03 Native American, 0.01 Asian, and 0.003 "other." Since such data were not previously collected, no trends can be reported.

Control Items

Historically, the survey has included questions about the locus of power and authority in the roles and functions of superintendents and school boards. The work of superinten-

dents and board members has been cast in executive function (essentially superintendent and staff) and policy function (essentially board) with considerable interest residing in how the scope of those functions is defined. References were often made in the past to boards as "rubber stamps," existing only to legitimize the proposals of superintendents and to assure a flow of resources sufficient to match the educational needs of the school district as determined by school executives.

Three questions were asked in 1982 about the locus of control. Of interest was whether it rested with school superintendents or school boards. In addressing who takes the lead in the development of policy, 75.7 percent of the superintendents reported that they did, 22.4 percent said it was shared, 1.9 percent indicated that the board took the lead and 0.1 percent said it rested with the board chairperson. The orientation of new school board members (a second control item and a major element of socialization) rests with the superintendent in 37.7 percent of the districts, with experienced board members in 4.7 percent, with school board associations in 12.1 percent, and through shared responsibility in 39.5 percent of the districts. New board members received no formal orientation in 4.4 percent of the districts. Preparation of the agenda, the third control item, is solidly in superintendents' hands, 84.2 percent in fact. Board chairpersons prepare the agenda in almost none of the districts (0.2 percent), whereas the task is shared in 15.0 percent of the districts.

Community Participation

Community participation and involvement have been subjects of widespread discussion and debate during the last two decades. The 1982 survey includes questions about parent and citizen participation in school district decision making and the nature of such participation.

Superintendents believe citizen participation is important. In fact, 57.6 percent believe it is more important now than a decade ago; 32.9 percent believe it is of about the same importance. Fewer than 7 percent feel it is less important. Moreover, superintendents reported that their boards viewed citizen participation favorably. Although 17.3 percent said board members had a "take it or leave it" view and

4.2 percent viewed it unfavorably, 77.1 percent said their board members looked with favor upon citizen involvement.

Superintendents indicated how parents and other citizens were involved in planning-advisory capacities. Those responses are listed in decreasing rank order:

- Objectives and priorities for the school;
- Program changes and new programs being considered;
- Fund raising;
- Student activities;
- Evaluation of programs;
- Student behavior, rights and responsibilities;
- Finance and budget.

Although superintendents were not previously asked about involvement in these terms, it is worth noting that the 1982 responses reflect emphasis upon educational matters as opposed to managerial concerns. "Objectives and priorities for the school," "program changes and new programs," and "evaluation of programs" ranked 1, 2 and 5 respectively. "Fund raising" and "finance and budget" ranked 3 and 7. Had this question been asked in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, it is likely that school facilities and capital outlay would have been ranked higher.

The willingness of students, parents and other commu-

Table 17
Superintendents' Perceptions of Students, Parents and Community Members Participation (National Weighted Profile)

Perception of Willingness to Participate	Students (Percent of Superintendents agreeing with statements)	Parents/Community Members
More willing to participate than in the past	29.4	42.7
Less willing to participate than in the past	9.6	9.6
Willingness remains about the same	55.1	45.5
Don't know	6.0	1.5

nity members to participate was questioned. Superintendents believe that students (29.4 percent) and parents/community members (40.7 percent) are more willing to participate now than in the past. (See Table 17.)

Evaluation of Superintendents

Evaluation of personnel is a high priority for American educational institutions. As a result of the press for accountability so prominent during the past two decades, mandated evaluation of personnel and discussions of merit salary systems have become more prominent. For these reasons, several questions in the 1982 survey pertained to the evaluation of superintendents.

About three fourths of the superintendents reported that they have job descriptions. Of those, roughly 59 percent said that they are evaluated in terms of those descriptions. The frequency and calendar of evaluations vary substantially:

- Annually 69.5 percent
- Semi-annually 7.7 percent
- Contract renewal time 10.9 percent
- Never 4.9 percent
- Other 4.8 percent
- Don't know 2.2 percent

In terms of procedure, 29.9 percent are evaluated formally, 42.5 percent informally, 25.5 percent both formally and informally, 2.1 percent didn't know and 6.5 percent did not respond. Of those not formally evaluated, 9.3 percent said that their boards saw a need to develop a formal procedure for evaluation, 60.7 percent did not and 30.0 percent did not know. On the other hand, superintendents not formally evaluated saw more need for it, but not unanimously. Of those, about 45 percent favored the formal approach; 55 percent did not.

The major reasons for boards evaluating superintendents are listed in decreasing rank order:

- To provide periodic and systematic accountability;
- To help you establish relevant performance goals;
- To identify areas needing improvement;

- To assess present performance in accordance with prescribed standards:
- To determine salary for the following year;
- To comply with board policy.

Low ranking was given to "to document general dissatisfaction with your performance." The reasons are, by and large, constructive and do not reflect a tone of "out to get" the superintendent.

At a more definitive level, superintendents were asked to indicate the degree to which specific criteria are factors in their evaluation. Their responses are listed in decreasing rank order:

- General effectiveness of your performance;
- Educational leadership and knowledge;
- Board/superintendent relationships;
- Management functions;
- Community/superintendent relationships;
- Budget development and implementation;
- Staff/superintendent relationships;
- Your personal characteristics;
- Recruitment, employment and supervision of personnel;
- Student/superintendent relationships.

"Student/superintendent relationships" was ranked last, probably because the life of the superintendent is often removed from sustained relationships with students except in very small school districts. In the past, a few superintendents taught classes on occasion, partially to maintain an association with students. No attempt was made to inquire about the frequency of classroom teaching or interaction with students in the 1982 survey so accurate, current data are not available.

Questions were asked about the methods (techniques) that boards use in the evaluation process. Superintendents selected the two most important methods from a list of fourteen. The top six are listed in decreasing rank order:

- Discussion at a meeting of the board and superintendent;
- Discussion at an executive meeting of board members only;

- Rating forms used individually and/or collectively;
- Observation and association of board and superintendent at meetings, other times;
- Evaluation against goals and objectives for past year;
- Criteria previously agreed to by the board and the superintendent.

The questions do not indicate whether or not some of the methods and techniques were used in combination. It is quite likely that rating forms are used during discussions at meetings of the board with the superintendent or at executive sessions of the board alone. Slightly fewer than 9 percent of the superintendents reported that they have the opportunity to respond to the board evaluation. Only 1.4 percent indicated that they have the opportunity to measure the performance of the board. Rather surprisingly, only 1.6 percent said their board consulted with others (parents, community leaders) during the evaluation process. Nearly 10 percent of the superintendents receive a written evaluation from their boards.

Expectations of Board Members for Superintendents

Superintendents were asked to name two of the primary expectations that board members hold for them. Those responses are summarized in descending rank order:

• Skill in human relations	46.4 percent
• Knowledge of finance	45.2 percent
• Internal management	42.3 percent
• Public relations/community relations	19.8 percent
• Planning	17.8 percent
• Curriculum development	14.0 percent
• Other	3.3 percent
• Don't know	1.2 percent

These data warrant some interpretation and analysis. If superintendents' estimates of what boards expect of them are accurate, boards want their chief executives to run the school enterprise. Finance, internal management, planning and curriculum development have strong intra-

organizational leanings. Public relations and community relations and human relations have both internal and external significance. It is somewhat surprising that these expectations fall so heavily on internal matters when many districts are confronted with loss of public confidence and declining resources.

Problems Board Members Face

Superintendents were asked what they see as the most difficult problems board members face. The five highest are listed here:

- Financial issues — 35.0 percent
- Community pressures — 19.0 percent
- Understanding and fulfilling appropriate board role — 13.0 percent
- Internal board conflict — 8.1 percent
- Employee relations — 6.0 percent
- No response — 4.8 percent

Two of these problems relate to the board as a board, "understanding and fulfilling the appropriate board role" and "internal board conflict." Others, "financial issues" and "community pressures," tie to the boards' community representation function. "Employee relations" links rather fundamentally to matters internal to the system's operation.

Board Member Sources of Information

Superintendents were also asked to report their estimates of how much weight board members give to information from varying sources. (See Table 18.)

Superintendents, understandably, place heavy emphasis on themselves as sources of information for boards. It is not surprising either that central office staff and parents are believed to be important groups with information of value. If there are surprises in these findings, it is the lack of weight given to information from teacher organizations, other employees, special interest groups, the local power structure and school board organizations. The superintendent is, if these views are valid, very much in the driver's seat since

the superintendent and the central office staff are seen as having considerable weight with board members.

Table 18
Board Members' Information Sources (National Weighted Profile)

Information Sources	Very Great Weight (percent of superintendents who judge information sources and effect)	Very Little or No Weight
District superintendent	76.1	1.9
Central office staff	21.2	9.5
Teacher organizations	4.1	21.3
Other employees	2.5	19.9
Parents	17.9	3.4
Students	4.3	23.8
Special interest groups in the community	9.0	22.3
Local power structure in the community	12.5	22.2
School board organizations	6.1	26.0

Issues and Challenges Facing Superintendents

In 1971 and 1982, superintendents were asked to rank issues and challenges facing them in terms of their significance. "Financing schools" was number one in 1971 and again in 1982. But there the similarity stops. For the 18 most often cited issues and challenges, see Table 19, next page.

Many items included in the top 18 in 1982 were also there 10 years ago. "Financing schools," "assessing of education outcomes," "greater visibility of the superintendent," "use of drugs in schools" and "school staff relations, strikes or other forms of teacher militancy" are examples.

Several important items are new to the top 18: "planning and goal setting," "accountability/credibility," "staff and administrator evaluation," "administrator/board relations," "special education/Public Law 94-142," "obtaining timely and accurate information for decision making," "parent apathy and irresponsibility about their own children, includ-

Table 19
Issues/Challenges Identified as of Significant Importance (National Weighted Profiles)

Issues/Challenges 1982	Issues/Challenges 1971
1. Financing schools	1. Financing schools
2. Planning and goal setting	2. Demands for new ways of teaching or operating the educational program
3. Assessing educational outcomes	3. Greater visibility of the superintendent
4. Accountability/credibility	4. Changes in values and social norms
5. Staff and administrator evaluation	5. School staff relations, strikes, or other forms of teacher militancy
6. Administrator/board relations	6. Growing federal involvement in education
7. Special education/Public Law 94-142	7. Reorganization of small districts into larger units of administration
8. Obtaining timely and accurate information for decision making	8. Assessment of educational outcomes
9. Issues such as negotiations, strikes	9. Caliber of persons assigned to or removed from school boards
10. Rapidly decreasing/increasing enrollments	10. Caliber of responsibilities assigned to or removed from school boards
11. Greater visibility of the superintendent	11. Social/cultural issues such as race relations, integration or segregation
12. Personal time management	12. Rapidly increasing student enrollments
13. Parent apathy and irresponsibility about their own children—including child abuse	13. Changing priorities in curriculum
14. Compliance with state and federal record keeping requirements	14. Use of drugs in schools
15. Student discipline	15. Increasing attacks upon the superintendent
16. Staff recruitment/selection	16. Growing support for non-public schools
17. Changes in values and behavioral norms	17. Student activism
18. Use of drugs and alcohol in the schools	18. Decentralization of large districts

ing child abuse," "personal time management" and "staff recruitment/selection." The enrollments item was labeled differently in each survey. In 1971, "rapidly increasing student enrollments" ranked 12; in 1982, "rapidly decreasing/increasing enrollments" ranked 10.

Dropped from the 18 in 1982, were "social/cultural issues such as race relations, integration and segregation," "decentralization of large districts," "student activism," "growing support for non-public schools," "changing priorities in curriculum," "growing federal involvement in education," "demands for new ways of teaching or operating the educational program," "reorganization of small districts into larger units of administration," "caliber of persons assigned to or removed from school boards" and "caliber of responsibilities assigned to or removed from school boards."

"Special Education/Public Law 94-142" literally came out of nowhere in the early 1970s and remained an issue through the period of the 1982 survey. This issue is a little narrower than "planning and goal setting" or "growing federal involvement in education" which ranked sixth in 1971.

Professional Preparation of Superintendents

There has been a remarkable change in the level of preparation of superintendents over the past 10 years. A decade ago 15.4 percent had doctorates or beyond; by 1982, that number had risen to 33.4 percent. (See Table 20.)

Table 20
Highest Earned Degrees
(National Weighted Profile)

Degrees	1982 (in percents)	1971
Less than B.A.	0.0	0.4
Bachelor's degree	1.1	2.3
Master's degree	48.0	65.7
Specialist/6th year	17.1	16.3
Doctorate only	28.0	12.5
Doctorate plus	5.4	2.9
Other	0.4	0.3
No response	2.1	0.0

An examination of these data indicate that the acquisition of formal preparation has progressed at a substantial rate over the past decade. Of additional interest is the deviation between the actual levels of preparation American superintendents have earned in contrast with state certification requirements. They have far exceeded those requirements and reflect levels of formal preparation that are quite remarkable.

Interesting differences exist between highest earned degrees and the sizes of districts where superintendents are working. (See Table 21.) Not surprisingly, superintendents in larger districts (Groups A & B) hold doctorate degrees far more often than do superintendents in smaller districts (Groups C & D).

Table 21
Highest Earned Degrees by District Size

Degrees	Weighted Profile Percent	Group A No.	Group A Percent	Group B No.	Group B Percent	Group C No.	Group C Percent	Group D No.	Group D Percent	Unweighted Profile No.	Unweighted Profile Percent
Bachelor's degree	1.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	0.5	9	4.1	12	0.9
Master's degree	48.0	23	20.7	119	30.5	296	51.0	137	63.1	575	44.3
Specialist/ 6th year	17.1	3	2.7	26	6.7	119	20.5	46	21.2	194	14.9
Doctorate only	28.0	65	58.8	198	50.8	136	23.4	23	10.6	422	32.5
Doctorate plus	5.4	20	18.0	46	11.8	24	4.1	1	0.5	91	7.0
Other	0.4	0	0.0	1	0.3	3	0.5	1	0.5	5	0.4
Total		111		390		581		217		1299	
Not Reporting		2		13		12		13		40	

Group A—25,000 or more students; **Group B**—3,000 to 24,999 students; **Group C**—300 to 2,999 students; **Group D**—Less than 300 students:

Persons are starting and finishing each degree at a much earlier age than 10 years ago. (See Table 22.) Master's and/or specialist's studies are being concluded at approximately the same age that those same programs were begun 10 years ago.

A number of other general findings include:

- The source of financial support for graduate study shifted from the G.I. Bill to loans and fellowships.
- The number of semesters/quarters of full-time study increased.

Table 22
Ages for Start and Completion of Degree Study

Degree	Median Ages 1982	Median Ages 1971
Master's:		
start	26.0	28.8
completion	28.7	32.8
Specialist/sixth year:		
start	31.8	36.5
completion	35.3	38.6
Doctorate		
start	33.0	33.4
completion	37.3	39.1

- Those who borrowed money to earn doctorates, borrowed an average of $3,902.

On the whole, graduate programs received good ratings:

- The most often cited strength of graduate programs was the quality of the professors.
- The major weaknesses of graduate programs were lack of time for full-time study and poor or irrelevant courses.
- There is a strengthened respect for educational research.

Skills or Information Needed to Remain Effective

Superintendents were asked what new skills or information they felt they needed to continue to be effective. These data are of particular value to those planning programs of graduate study or inservice education. Those items are listed below in descending rank order, based on the National Weighted Profile:

- General management skills;
- Human relations skills;
- Data management/technology;
- Financial skills;
- Knowledge of social and education change processes;
- Other conflict resolution skills;
- Political skills;
- Research skills.

Superintendents indicated the degree to which the "issues and challenges" should be emphasized in preservice programs, inservice programs or both. Of interest to preservice program planners may be the relatively modest weight superintendents placed on the coverage of "issues and challenges" in university-based preservice curricula. Much stronger emphasis was placed on treating the "issues and challenges" through inservice.

Self Fulfillment

"What are your future plans in the superintendency?" This question drew an important set of responses. Slightly less than half indicated that they will continue in a superintendency until the normal retirement age. In 1971, the figure was 44.9 percent. In response to whether or not they would continue in the superintendency until they qualified for minimum state retirement benefits, 21.4 percent said they would in comparison with 34.8 percent in 1971. Fewer expressed an interest in university positions than 10 years ago, but more said they would leave for a desirable position outside education. In 1971, 2.3 percent said the superintendency was an impossible position and wanted out as soon as possible; in 1982, only 1.1 percent so indicated. Overall, these data support the observation that a higher level of satisfaction in the superintendency exists now than in the recent past.

The top 10 issues, should they intensify, that would drive superintendents out of their positions are:

- Issues such as negotiations, strikes and other forms of teacher militancy — 19.5 percent
- Caliber of persons assigned to or removed from local boards of education — 15.0 percent
- Administrator/board relations — 14.4 percent
- Increasing attacks upon the superintendent — 12.5 percent
- Financing schools — 12.5 percent
- No issue significant enough to cause one to leave — 7.0 percent
- Consolidation of small districts — 3.9 percent

- Social-cultural issues such as race relations, integration, or segregation 2.2 percent
- Parent apathy and irresponsibility about their own children, including child abuse 1.8 percent
- Rapidly decreasing/increasing enrollments 1.4 percent

Several of the issues that would cause superintendents to leave have changed over the decade. In 1971, "social-cultural issues such as race relations, integration or desegregation" ranked first. Ten years later it ranked eighth.

The significant new data include the high rankings given to issues of tension between school board members and superintendents. Three of the top four issues related to matters involving the governors (board members) and managers (superintendents) of education. Each of these three had much lower rankings in 1971. These rankings appear to be an accurate reflection of the 1980s which have brought more and more discussion of problems involving the roles and functions of board members and superintendents.

As school districts encounter more and more severe financial difficulties and bouts with the spin-offs of decline, the pressure on boards and superintendents is likely to intensify. The obvious consequence is an increased need to specify responsibilities more clearly for both the executive and policy persons in school districts. Clarifying those functions and responsibilities, as wholesome as the process is, often results in tensions. Patience and understanding are needed in order to deal with those situations.

The 1980s might bring a renewed emphasis on the development of strength in the board-superintendent relationships, based upon clearer specifications of what the partners in the governance and management of education have a right to expect of one another.

Personal/Professional Self-Fulfillment

In the 1970s and early 1980s, people generally became more self-centered. Persons were urged to think about themselves, probe their feelings and get in touch with themselves. The consequence of this preoccupation with self may be a loss of the sense of the collective, the civic, the citizen, the public responsibility. Observers have remarked that people

have over indulged. Despite these reminders, superintendents were asked directly about their self-fulfillment in the superintendency. (See Table 23.)

It is reassuring to note the percentage who find considerable fulfillment in the superintendency. Somehow, the superintendency appears to be attracting and retaining persons who accept the difficulties and challenges and enjoy the position.

Table 23
Self-fulfillment of the Superintendency (National Weighted Sample)

Degree of Self-Fulfillment	
None	0.0 percent
Little	4.0 percent
Moderate	32.1 percent
Considerable	63.2 percent
No response	0.9 percent

Stress in the Superintendency

The subject of stress was in the spotlight during the 1970s and continued into the 1980s. Programs on stress have been featured in inservice education programs in most professions. In 1982, superintendents were asked whether they felt the superintendency was a stressful occupation. (See Table 24.)

The only conclusion to be reached from these data is that the superintendency is a stressful position. Nevertheless, superintendents report considerable fulfillment in their performance within a highly stressful occupation. Comparative

Table 24
Degree of Stress in the Superintendency (National Weighted Profile)

Degree of Stress	Superintendents' Opinions
None	0.4 percent
Little	7.3 percent
Some	45.1 percent
Considerable	39.4 percent
Very great	7.7 percent
No response	1.0 percent

data for earlier decades do not exist nor are there comparisons to be drawn with other executive positions.

The 1982 survey research team probed for what troubles superintendents. Responses to one item "I am kept awake at night thinking about tasks undone or problems unresolved" support the 1982 survey results regarding the degree of fulfillment and stress in the superintendency. Superintendents indicate that they very frequently (4.1 percent), frequently (9.6 percent), sometimes (30.8 percent), almost never (41.8 percent) and never (13.6 percent) are kept awake at night. Consistent with other findings in this survey, superintendents report they are concerned about "financial matters" and "levy issues." Superintendents indicate that they almost never (7.9 percent) or never (1.3 percent) are concerned about such matters. Related to these responses, they reported similar concerns about "gaining community support for school programs" and "lack of control over events which occur that affect the schools."

Areas about which superintendents expressed little concern were "relations with teacher unions or associations," "relating to, and being supported by, the local power structure" and "whether or not they made the right decisions on matters with which they have just dealt." Overall, superintendents appear to be reasonably confident about themselves and their abilities.

School District Data

In the past, surveys have included questions about the grade organization in the nation's school districts. The graded structures of local school districts have changed little in recent years. In 1982, they appear as follows:

K–12/1-12	80.3 percent
K–8/1–8	12.4 percent
9–12	2.2 percent
K–6/1–6	2.0 percent
K–9/1–9	0.3 percent
7–12	0.4 percent

Of course, there are other districts, such as vocational, special education and non-operating. In a few instances,

superintendents serve two districts.

Only 28.1 percent of the districts have pre-kindergarten education programs, most often the larger and/or urban districts. No data are available for 1971.

Enrollments are declining in 68.2 percent of the districts, increasing in 25.9 percent and remaining stable in 4.1 per-

Table 25
School Districts by Social Structure (National Weighted Profile)

District Categories	Percentages
Major urban center (school district contains a central city of 200,000 or more population)	1.2
City district (school district contains a central city of 50,000 to 199,999 population)	4.4
Suburban (school district *does not* contain a central city of 50,000 or more but is located within a county or contiguous counties adjudged to be socially and economically integrated with the central city)	24.4
Nonurban/Suburban (all school districts not identified above)	70.1

Table 26
School Districts by Geographical Regions (National Weighted Profile)

Regions*	Percentage
New England	5.3
Mideast	13.8
Southeast	11.6
Great Lakes	22.7
Plains	18.6
Southwest	10.0
Rocky Mountains	5.2
Far West	12.0
Alaska	0.5
Other	0.1

*States included in geographic regions: *New England:* CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT; *Mideast:* DE, DC, MD, NJ, NY, PA; *Southeast:* AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV; *Great Lakes:* IL, IN, MI, OH, WI; *Plains:* IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD; *Southwest:* AZ, NM, OK, TX; *Rocky Mountains:* CO, ID, MT, UT, WY; *Far West:* CA, HI, NV, OR, WA.

cent. The widespread concern about declining enrollments has overshadowed the growth experienced in one fourth of the districts, many of them in the Sunbelt region.

Superintendents were asked to place their districts in categories that would best describe them in terms of social structure. (See Table 25.)

The characteristics of school districts have not changed substantially in recent years. More than 94 percent are non-urban (rural) or suburban as defined for the survey. Fewer than 6 percent are city or major urban center districts. For the geographical location of districts, see Table 26.

Staffing

New questions about staffing patterns, numbers and characteristics of central office personnel and collective bargaining were also included in the 1982 survey. The median number of central office administrators, not counting the superintendent, is 1.0, which reflects the large numbers of small school districts in the country.

Representation of Women on Central Office Staffs

The number of women in central office positions represents much of the executive talent pool from which women candidates for advancement to the superintendency are to be found. Approximately one fourth of the central office staffs are women. Comparative data have not been collected in the past. Given little growth in the numbers of female superintendents in the past decade as indicated earlier, it is problematic whether the numbers of female central office administrative staff have increased.

Ethnic Representation on Central Office Staffs

Data on ethnic group representation among central office administrators were requested for the first time in 1982. The larger districts predictably appear to be those with ethnic representation. In order of median non-white representations, the rankings are: Black (non-Hispanic), 0.07 percent; Chicano/Hispanic, 0.03 percent; Native American (Indian/Eskimo), 0.01 percent; Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.01 percent;

and other, 0.001 percent. These figures represent ethnic representation across the entire United States. Various geographical areas would show major differences.

Span of Control

The numbers of subordinates reporting to chief executives has long been a concern of organizational analysts and students of administration. American superintendents have from no one to a total of 96 persons reporting directly to them. The median is 7.0. Obviously, district size makes a difference. (See Table 27.)

Table 27
Staff Members Reporting Directly to the Superintendent

	Weighted Profile	Group A		Group B		Group C		Group D		Unweighted Profile	
	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Less than 2	3.2	0	0.0	2	0.6	17	3.1	16	7.5	35	2.7
2–3	15.1	6	5.5	69	17.7	90	16.1	20	9.3	185	14.6
4–5	19.4	25	23.0	105	27.0	119	21.4	8	3.8	257	20.3
6–7	15.5	34	31.2	47	12.0	111	19.9	12	5.6	204	16.0
8–9	9.7	17	15.6	30	7.7	67	12.0	10	4.7	124	9.8
10–14	16.0	21	19.3	84	21.5	65	11.7	45	20.8	215	17.0
15–19	6.4	3	2.7	30	7.7	17	3.1	33	15.3	168	13.7
20 or more	14.7	3	2.7	22	5.9	72	13.5	71	33.1	168	13.7
Total		109		389		558		215		1271	
Not reporting		4		14		35		15		68	

Group A—25,000 or more students; **Group B**—3,000 to 24,999 students; **Group C**—300 to 2,999 students; **Group D**—Less than 300 students:

Reliance on Administrative Services

As schools enter a period of more intensive austerity, the quality and nature of supportive services will become more and more important. So will the specializations.

Superintendents appraised the subordinate administrative service areas which they rely on *most* heavily. The services most needed include:

- Principals 24.0 percent
- Business Service 16.8 percent

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- General Administration 11.7 percent
- Instructional area 7.2 percent
- Other 6.5 percent
- Finance 4.6 percent
- Personnel 3.7 percent
- Buildings 1.4 percent
- None 1.1 percent

It is surprising that one fifth of the superintendents said they "don't know." Principals were named by almost one fourth of the superintendents which may indicate the respect that superintendents have for building-level administrators. "Instructional services," "finance" and "personnel" were ranked relatively low. These rankings may reflect the large number of small districts where these tasks are carried by the superintendents themselves.

Future Administrative Team Needs

The 1982 survey asked respondents to identify the types of administrators needed in the future. Those named most often in descending order include:

- Curriculum and instruction,
- None needed,
- Data processing,
- Business management,
- Public relations,
- Attorneys,
- Staff development,
- More general administrators,
- Research & development,
- More elementary specialists.

The ranking of curriculum and instruction specialists is reassuring. It reinforces the observation that general administrators are focusing more intensively on children, learning outcomes, problems of curriculum development and instructional improvement. The second place ranking of "none needed" may be a manifestation of enrollment decline, resource shrinkage and the many smaller-sized districts. Data processing, ranking third, may reflect microcomputer applications in school districts and a recognition

of the potential contributions of technology to management functions. Administrators are responding to the world-wide knowledge and information explosion which is affecting individuals, institutions and societies. It is reasonable to expect that school districts will have to acquire, one way or another, considerable expertise and sophistication in these arenas.

Negotiations

Collective bargaining has been a fact of executive life in education in many school districts for some time. Strikes and withholding of services have become commonplace in several states, even in the face of legislation which prohibits them.

Chief negotiators in the nation's school districts vary. The 1982 survey is the first used to identify current practices. The results show:

• Superintendents	36.1 percent
• Professional negotiator from outside	19.2 percent
• Board members	23.6 percent
• Professional negotiator from inside	10.0 percent
• Board attorney	5.6 percent
• Don't know	2.9 percent
• None	2.1 percent
• No response	5.8 percent

Almost one third of the districts use professional negotiators. Smaller districts are more likely to have board members and superintendents negotiate. Professional negotiators are more likely to be used in those states where negotiations have been commonplace for years and where experience has indicated that better results are achieved when professionals are involved. Negotiations can consume substantial amounts of time, and as the practice goes on year after year, more expertise may be required.

Strike Experience

How much experience do superintendents have in dealing with strikes? The question presented in the 1982 study was "How many strikes have you experienced during your career

as superintendent?" The mean was 0.2 and the median was 0.06 per superintendent. Two returns, quite likely in error, reported 59 and 60 strikes per superintendent. Minus those extremes, the range was 0 to 6 strikes per career. For responses by district size and location, see Tables 28 and 29.

Table 28
Strikes Experienced by Superintendents

Number of Strikes	Weighted Profile Percent	Group A No.	Group A Percent	Group B No.	Group B Percent	Group C No.	Group C Percent	Group D No.	Group D Percent	Unweighted Profile No.	Unweighted Profile Percent
No strikes	89.2	80	72.7	295	74.5	544	92.4	221	99.1	1140	86.5
1 strike	7.3	15	13.6	70	17.7	30	5.1	1	0.4	116	8.8
2 strikes	2.3	9	8.2	15	3.8	13	2.2	1	9.4	38	2.9
3 strikes	1.0	3	2.7	14	3.5	1	0.2	0	0.0	18	1.4
4 strikes	0.1	2	1.8	1	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	0.2
5 strikes	0.0	1	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.1
6 or more strikes	0.2	0	0.0	1	0.3	1	0.2	0	0.0	1	0.1
Total		110		396		589		223		1318	
Not reporting		3		7		4		7		21	
Mean	0.21										0.25
Median	0.06										0.08

Group A—25,000 or more students; **Group B**—3,000 to 24,999 students; **Group C**—300 to 2,999 students; **Group D**—Less than 300 students:

Table 29
Superintendents Experiencing One or More Strikes (National Weighted Profile)

Regions*	Percentages
New England	9.4
Mideast	18.4
Southeast	3.6
Great Lakes	22.4
Plains	1.9
Southwest	3.4
Rocky Mountains	6.6
Far West	10.7
Alaska	0.0

*States included in geographic regions. *New England:* CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT; *Mideast:* DE, DC, MD, NJ, NY, PA; *Southeast:* AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV; *Great Lakes:* IL, IN, MI, OH, WI; *Plains:* IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD; *Southwest:* AZ, NM, OK, TX; *Rocky Mountains:* CO, ID, MT, UT, WY; *Far West:* CA, HI, NV, OR, WA.

The National Weighted Profile data in Table 28 indicate that nearly 11 percent of the superintendents have experienced strikes during their careers. In fact, over 25 percent of the superintendents in larger districts (3,000 enrollment and above) have experienced at least one strike and, in the largest districts (25,000 enrollment and above) more than 13 percent have lived through at least two. At the other end of the continuum, superintendents in districts of 300 enrollment and less have experienced few, if any, strikes.

In Table 29, data regarding strike experience are presented by region. Superintendents in the Great Lakes area are the most experienced followed by the Mideast. More than one in five Great Lakes region superintendents have had experience with strikes. On the other hand, superintendents in Alaska and the Plains states have had the least.

Summary

American school superintendents have some features in common. At the same time, they exhibit remarkably different characteristics when compared in terms of size of district, sex, or levels of preparation. There have been some important changes over the years but, at the same time, some of the descriptors of superintendents remain much the same. Superintendents in 1982 are better prepared than ever before, slightly younger than 10 years ago, change jobs slightly more often than in the past, see finance as the most difficult problem, experience some stress, but are reasonably confident about themselves.

Part 2: Themes and Trends

Several significant themes and trends emerged from the 1982 findings. For the first time, researchers conducting the surveys of the superintendency identified transcendent "macro themes."

In considering the six themes, it is important to keep in mind that they are drawn from the views superintendents hold about themselves, about the settings in which they work, about challenges and issues they face, and about their estimates of the future. These themes are not reflections of what board members, university professors or community leaders might say about the superintendency. These are superintendents reporting on themselves.

The data upon which the themes are based have been reported in other sections of this report. Some are repeated here only to emphasize their relationship to the themes.

Theme One: A Demanding Post in Transition

High Levels of Fulfillment and Satisfaction

Despite the commonly held view that the superintendency is a rough, tough, demanding job, two thirds of the males and three fourths of the women find it considerably fulfilling. In fact, only 5 percent of the men and 1 percent of

the women find little fulfillment in the job. When those indicating moderate fulfillment combine with those who indicate considerable fulfillment, 95.3 percent of the male superintendents and 99.1 percent of the women superintendents perceive their profession as fulfilling.

Many Would Choose the Superintendency Again

A test of belief in and commitment to a profession is whether the people in the profession would choose to do it all over again. Over half of the superintendents (males and females) say they would, but this total is down substantially from a decade ago. Slightly fewer now than 10 years ago report that the superintendency is an impossible position and they want out as soon as possible.

On the other hand there are issues that would drive many superintendents from the profession should those issues intensify. The number one issue for both male and female superintendents is "negotiations, strikes and other forms of teacher militancy."

More Plan to Stay Until Retirement

More superintendents now plan to continue in the superintendency until normal retirement age compared to a decade ago. Substantially fewer (less than half as many) plan to take early retirement as soon as they can qualify for minimum benefits. This change may be explained by the steady encroachment of inflation, making the prospect of living off retirement income much less attractive than in the past.

Of those who would like to leave the superintendency, five percent more than 10 years ago say they would prefer to leave education entirely, many for positions in business.

Long Hours, Hard Work

The work patterns of superintendents generate a great deal of interest each time the superintendency is studied. How many hours per week do they put in? How many evenings, Saturdays, Sundays? The Puritan ethic regarding work appears to be alive and well in the American family of superintendents. They report an average of 54.5 hours per week at their jobs; this figure includes evenings and weekends.

Turnover Rate Higher, Length of Service Lower

Two indicators of change in the superintendency are a slightly higher turnover rate and reduced total length of service in the position. Ten years ago the average was between 6 to 6.5 years per superintendency and in 1982 the average is estimated at 5.6 years. In comparison, the average length for service of board members is five years. In terms of total number of years in the superintendency, the 1982 median is nearly one year less than in 1971. The longest tenure reported was 22 years. The recent AASA Survey of members shows a mean of seven years.

Job Mobility Low

Although the popular image is one of high job mobility, superintendents tend to stay in one position for some time. The average number of superintendencies held is 1.7 (median, 1.3), and the maximum, 7. Movement between and among states is not pronounced either. The average number of states is 1.2 (median, 1.1); the greatest number of states reported is 6.

Some Are Fired

Another indication of job pressure is the number of superintendents who are fired or face the possibility of being fired. Nearly half the superintendents who responded gave as the reason for leaving their last position: the new position was a promotion or offered a higher salary. Slightly more than 15 percent, however, said they left their last superintendency because of conflict with the board, the possibility of being fired or being fired. Employment changes that result from firings produce stress in all occupations, including the superintendency.

Stress Is Tolerable

The position is stressful. Nearly one half report "some stress," more than one third say there is "considerable stress" and one-in-twelve indicate "very great stress." The responses on stress are similar for males and females.

Superintendents overall sleep pretty well at night, they feel reasonably confident about themselves and they work

hard. They are quite distressed about some things, but in general feel up to the challenges. They are concerned about their profession; they see its status and prestige about the same as superintendents saw it a decade ago. Women and minorities both view the superintendency as growing in importance and status.

Theme Two: Enhanced Managerial and Leadership Capacities

A marked change has occurred in the levels of preparation of today's superintendents in contrast to those of a decade ago.

Very Advanced Levels of Preparation

One out of 20 superintendents have done formal work beyond the doctorate. When this figure is combined with the percentage holding doctorates, the news is that 33.4 percent of all superintendents hold doctorates or beyond compared to 15.4 percent in 1971. That figure represents more than a 100 percent increase in the numbers over that period. Furthermore, the percentages of males and females with the doctorate are nearly the same. It seems reasonable to predict that by 1992, one half of all superintendents will have earned doctorates.

Potential Administrators Entering Programs Earlier

Men are entering Masters, Specialist and Doctoral programs at earlier ages. Women are entering their training a bit later. Men are completing their programs at earlier ages, too. In fact, those completing these degree areas are two to three years younger than were similar candidates 10 years ago. The net effect of this change is the earlier incorporation of better trained professionals into the executive work force thus extending their potential years of service. Theoretically, at least, that fact could lead to better management of educational institutions. Adding validity to this argument is the similarity between the university courses superintendents said they consider valuable and the challenges and issues facing the superintendency which they ranked as critical.

Courses identified as of "importance" or "great importance" were:

- human relations
- personnel administration
- public relations
- school finance
- school business management
- legal aspects of education.

These courses relate well to the issues and challenges they face such as:

- "financing schools"
- "staff and administrator evaluation"
- "negotiations and strikes."

Educational Research Well-Regarded

Administrators have a high regard for educational research. About half (49.5 percent) said that it is "usually useful" or "highly useful." These findings are reassuring given widespread commentary in the 1960s and 1970s about the irrelevancy of educational research.

Preparation Evaluated More Favorably

In this survey, superintendents indicated they felt better about the quality of their preparation than they did 10 years ago. More than 70 percent rated their preparation as good or excellent. It is worth noting that AASA and state organizations of school administrators have, over the years, endorsed strongly the need to improve the quality of preservice education and to raise the levels of preservice preparation of administrators. AASA, through the National Academy for School Executives, and state organizations, through their inservice offerings have further strengthened the capacities of the superintendents to provide leadership and administer the nation's schools.

Additional Skills Sought

Even though the superintendents feel they are better prepared than ever and value preservice preparation, they are

seeking new skills consistent with continuing and emerging exigencies. They are seeking to build their competence in general management skills, human relations skills, data management and technology, financial skills and knowledge of social and educational change processes. There is no evidence of self-satisfaction or retreat to a dependency upon current levels of training.

Expanding Career Options

Today's superintendents have career options other than the superintendency. Superintendents have been recruited and encouraged to accept executive positions in business, industry, transportation and government. Several foundations are headed by former educators, in some cases former school superintendents. One fifth have had some experience in business earlier in their careers. The fact that superintendents are well educated and often have administrative specializations make them attractive candidates for non-education positions. Now that superintendents are finishing their preparation earlier, their prospects are enhanced for obtaining executive positions outside their chosen field. This situation could create a special problem for school districts if movement outside the field should become a trend.

Tone of Optimism

An attractive tone of optimism is embedded in the data. As indicated earlier, superintendents see many problems, issues and challenges. Some say they would leave if some of these pressures intensify. Nevertheless, about two thirds of today's superintendents see themselves most effective either now or in the years that lie ahead. In other words, they are confident about their competence. They don't see their most effective period professionally in the distant past.

Preparation is Costly and Requires Sacrifice

To achieve higher levels of education and training, many of today's superintendents paid a price, both in time (foregone income) and in costs of tuition, fees and living expenses during periods of full-time study. The number of semesters or quarters invested in full-time study increased

by nearly one third over the past 10 years. A major source of financial support for graduate study, the G.I. Bill, was not available to younger persons entering graduate study (most of whom are non-veterans). Consequently, student loans and fellowships became sources of support.

Such tenacity, in the face of odds, speaks well for those who persevere and enter the superintendency. It reflects an attractive toughness and goal-oriented behavior which fits with the requirements of the job.

Theme Three: Increased Tension Between Boards and Superintendents

School board-superintendent relations have long been a topic of discussion among board members, superintendents and researchers in educational administration. Analysis of findings from the 1982 survey, as well as other studies, indicate that serious tensions exist between boards and superintendents in many communities. However, there is no absolute way of comparing today's tensions with those of the past.

Changes Traced to Tensions

Why these tensions? One reason has already been reported: the number of superintendents (15 percent) who said they left their last superintendency either because of "conflict with the board, the prospect of being fired or being fired." That means that about one in six changes in the superintendency involved some tension (possibly severe) in this relationship.

A Potpourri of Board-Related Issues

Another indication of increased tensions is the number of superintendents who cited board-related issues and challenges as causes for them to leave the superintendency, should those issues intensify. "Caliber of persons assigned to or removed from local boards of education" and "administrator-board relations" were ranked second and third among those causes. In 1971, those issues were number 12 and 26 respectively. "Increasing attacks upon the super-

intendent" ranked fourth; this item could imply that some of these attacks are coming from school board members as well as from community sources. In 1971, that issue ranked number 16.

As reported earlier, "issues such as negotiations, strikes and other forms of teacher militancy" (which often involve the board) represents the most often cited reason for leaving the superintendency should such issues intensify. In addition, in 1982, "difficulty in relations with school board members" is stated as the tenth most important factor inhibiting superintendents' effectiveness.

Tensions in Governance and Management

The fact that these issues ranked so high is important to the future of education. Tensions between superintendents and boards have always existed. The first persons appointed to superintendencies 150 years ago often did not last long because board members became uncomfortable with paid executives taking over and performing tasks they had become accustomed to handling. Over the years, proposals have been made by responsible persons calling for the abandonment of school boards. These questions involving executive and policy functions are perennial, but the current conditions surrounding those relationships appear to be deteriorating.

Explanations Reside in the Times

In these times of declining enrollments and inflation, there is a high prospect for conflict to occur, even when the climate is filled with good intentions. The most persuasive and difficult-to-solve problem is school finance, according to superintendents. Furthermore, when asked to identify the most difficult problem facing board members, it also turned out to be finance. In addition, collective bargaining places increasing stress and strain on local school districts.

Matters of Control

Responses to three other survey questions offer further explanations about tensions affecting the superintendent. Historically, the question arises about the degree of control the superintendent has over executive and policy functions.

Boards are sometimes thought to be subject to the will of the superintendent. On the other hand, board members, in many districts, now have become more initiatory, less compliant, less willing to accept without question the proposals of superintendents.

In 1982, superintendents in more than four fifths of the districts report that they prepare the board agenda. There is power and control in agenda development, as scholars have noted on many occasions. It seems innocent enough, even efficient, for superintendents to put together the board agenda. But unless provisions exist for sustained and effective board participation in this process, the work of the board will be determined by the chief executive.

In response to the question about who takes the lead in the development of policy, slightly more than three fourths of the superintendents reported that they did; one fourth said it was shared. Very few indicated that the board took the lead; few, if any, said it rested with the board chairperson. Since the board is responsible for policy, board members may become restive when that responsibility is either, in fact or appearance, diminished or taken from them.

The third question that relates to control has to do with who orients new school board members. Although superintendents do not necessarily control orientation, they do orient new board members in more than one third of responding districts.

Information Sources

In another section of the survey, superintendents responded to a question about how much weight board members give to various sources of information used in the decision-making process. Superintendents overwhelmingly see themselves as the leading source of this important information. Central office staff, superintendents believe, are the second source of information which board members value followed by parents, the local power structure and special interest groups.

In the late 1960s, through most of the 1970s and continuing into the 1980s, school district information has been challenged frequently. Sometimes it was biased, inaccurate, incomplete or irrelevant. Such charges come, on occasion, from board members, from persons of the community and from bargaining groups during periods of negotiations.

Information Policy and Control

Information (its production, distribution and control) is America's number one business, a prominent source of jobs and a leading contributor to the Gross National Product. The control of school district information is likely to become an important subject for discussion as schools move toward the 1990s. It is technically possible for school board members to have computer terminals in their homes with access to all school district data in the system. As more and more data in areas such as finance, personnel, student records, district attendance, school programs, even the content of school subjects is placed in computers, new questions will arise about privacy and information ownership. It is now technically possible for boards to conduct board meetings without leaving home through conference telephone hook-ups and computers. This practice could play havoc with sunshine laws and upset perennial board watchers or other people interested in specific issues.

New Policy Required

The expansion of computer support systems for group decision making has arrived. New decision rules, policies and practices will be required to deal with information storage, accessing and distribution.

The presence and use of this technology can produce new tensions on the executive policymaker. Early attention to the issues of information control could help avoid difficulties in school board-superintendent relationships in the near future.

Theme Four: Movement Away From Equity Concerns

In 1971 and again in 1982, superintendents were asked to rank issues and challenges they face. In essence, superintendents were asked how they would likely be using their time and energy in the years ahead. The 1982 responses, compared to those of a decade ago, have special significance for the profession and may signal trouble spots or issues that may require attention.

Managerial Issues on Center Stage

Superintendents may be giving less concern to equality issues and devoting more attention to day-to-day managerial matters. Equity concerns are those involving rights, justice, non-discrimination, fairness and equality of opportunity. Managerial concerns are those which assess educational outcomes, planning and goal setting, accountability/credibility and staff and administrator evaluation. These managerial matters often contain equity problems but those problems are less visible.

Reflection of Shifts in Values and Priorities

Superintendents' appraisals of issues and challenges may be altered by their perceptions of changes in the context and environment of the times. The highest ranking issues and challenge pointed out by the 1982 survey (financing schools, planning and goal setting, assessing educational outcomes, accountability/credibility and staff/administrator evaluation) are consistent with society's demand for higher and more favorable institutional performance. They reflect society's call for prudence, efficiency and stewardship in times of declining resources. In the 1980s, these issues and challenges are reflections of our incredible battle with inflation.

Given the nation's economic uncertainty in the early 1980s, it is likely these issues and challenges will continue into the decade of the 1990s.

Social Items Drop in Rankings

Two items, which dropped from the top 15 issues and challenges in 1982, are "changes in values and behavioral norms" and "social/cultural issues such as race relations, integration or segregation." These are significant shifts. In 1971, the memories of Kent State, riots in the cities and student activism in high schools were vivid. Changes in family patterns were just being recognized. Issues such as abortion, women's rights. school desegregation and privacy were prominent.

Other Equity Issues Drop

A total of 36 issues and challenges were included in the 1982 study compared to 18 issues in the 1971 study. Several

items, each an equity concern, warrant mentioning. "Reduction in force" (RIF), "affirmative action programs/Title IX," "student rights resulting from due process requirements and court imposed procedures" and "barrier-free facilities for handicapped students" were not rated prominently. "RIF" involves firing or laying off personnel; "affirmative action and Title IX" are directed toward fairness and justice; "student rights" is clearly rights-oriented; and "facilities for handicapped" is also a very special rights problem. The lower rankings these items received may be a consequence of the growing outside pressure for prudence and efficiency and may not be indicative of a diminished belief in the challenges and issues embedded in equity problems.

Discrimination in Hiring and Promotion of Women and Minorities

Superintendents were asked about discriminatory hiring and promotional practices affecting women and minorities. Specifically, they were asked to what extent discriminatory hiring and promotional practices are a problem in limiting administrative career opportunities for women and for minorities. The responses show that male superintendents especially do not see these concerns as major problems.

More than two thirds of the men and three fourths of the women actively recruit women into administration. Minorities are actively recruited into administrative positions by more than one half the male superintendents and almost three fourths of the female superintendents. More than two thirds of the males and over four fifths of the females said they actively recruit women into administration; 31.2 percent of the males and 11.5 percent of the females said they do not. More than half the males and almost three fourths of the females who responded said that they actively recruit minorities; 45.3 percent of the males and 28.4 percent of the females said they do not. Since data are not available from a decade ago, comparisons and trends cannot be drawn.

Relaxation of Federal Enforcement

The 1982 responses to questions about discriminatory hiring and the recruitment of women and minorities may be influenced by the withdrawal of federal enforcement of, and commitment to, these equity areas. If so, these data might

indicate how rapidly the relaxation of the federal commitment to rights (imposed by the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government) can manifest itself in the behaviors of local school officials.

Theme Five: Crisis of Finance and Financial Management

Fiscal problems and issues abound within the survey data, indicating that financing education is a major, severe and enduring issue, at present an issue of crisis proportions.

Finding Revenues

From the early origins of public schools in the United States, boards and superintendents have been beset by problems of finding revenues and deciding how to use them. The severity of the financial pinch has varied over the years. The depression era of the 1930s, for example, was a period when property tax revenues were scarce. The 1950s and 1960s were years marked by unprecedented enrollment growth when monies were needed for school facilities as well as new personnel. The 1970s and 1980s are known for revenue short falls, tax revolts, mandates without resources and inflation. However, costs continued to rise, even in the face of an enrollment decline in two thirds of the nation's school districts. In many districts, teachers and other employee groups struck or threatened to strike, driven by a desire for their salaries to keep pace with inflation, i.e., to earn a respectable living. Many school districts, all across the nation, hang precariously on the brink of fiscal disaster.

The Number One Challenge

In 1971 and 1982, superintendents ranked "financing schools" as their number one challenge or issue. In 1982, they ranked "financial skills" fourth among their top needs to improve their effectiveness. They saw "budget development and implementation" as major criteria for boards use in their evaluation. They said "financial issues" are the most difficult problems their boards face. They listed "inadequate financing of schools" as the factor which most in-

hibits their effectiveness. They said that their boards expect them to have "knowledge of finance," which many say is a primary expectation of them, just behind "skill in human relations" and ahead of "internal management." This expectation was ranked the same for male and female superintendents. However, intermediate superintendents ranked it second to "skill in human relations." "School finance systems" and "school business management" were two of the graduate courses deemed essential for a beginning superintendent. Finally, one in eight of the superintendents said that "financing schools" is the one issue, should it intensify further, that would cause them to leave the superintendency.

The Politics of Finance

What about the overwhelming nature of the finance problem? Do superintendents have options? One option is to consider today's finance issues as both fiscal and political problems. Especially in times of scarcity, the political aspects of finance are much more visible. Both the revenue generating and dollar allocating functions of government become politicized. Under conditions of scarcity, cooperation and collaboration are more constructive than intensified competition. The superintendent's role in school finance becomes a political role, requiring political skills.

Superintendents' Civic Leadership

One of the previous surveys presented another option that might offer some help. The 1933 survey highlighted superintendents' civic leadership. Emphasis was placed upon leadership in civic associations as measured by the offices held in those associations. In that year, for example, 12 percent reported holding three or more such civic leadership offices, 21 percent two, 36 percent one and 32 percent none.

Similar data were collected for professional leadership measured by offices held in professional associations. Superintendents were more active in civic organizations than they were in professional groups during the period of the great depression, an era of great concern about paying teachers and keeping schools going. Today's climate seems similar.

Bridging Skills

A different and unrelated study of leadership skills has found that "bridging skills" will become increasingly important. Those who "bridge" have the capacity to link and integrate several public and private institutional interests. In fact, many effective and respected community leaders are active in several leadership areas simultaneously, areas such as education, mental health, religion, public housing, planning and youth employment. These persons are often leaders in business and professional circles, too.

Today, superintendents may have the opportunity to bridge into other arenas of community leadership and to place educational leadership both symbolically and practically into the civic leadership arena. The results of this investment of time and energy may be improved understanding of education by the community. Such skills also permit the superintendent to carry the messages of education informally to other influential community leaders. It is, in some measure, personal diplomacy on behalf of education. It is an occasion for placing education on broader community agendas and for breaking out of the tendency to look inward rather than outward for solutions to financial problems.

Finance Equity Issues

In the struggle to stay afloat, there is often too little time to address the issues of equity in school finance or the financial implications in equality of educational opportunity. Those matters will not go away even in the face of extreme austerity. On the contrary, difficult times may produce new inequities and inequalities that will serve to again light the fires of concern about these enduring issues. Consequently, school superintendents, school board members and leaders of professional organizations must maintain their concern about them.

Theme Six: Accountability, an Enduring Expectation

The term "accountability" took on considerable meaning in the 1960s and 1970s. National assessments, negative

votes on tax levy increases, growth of private schools, increased citizen participation, mandated testing and stress caused by collective bargaining are examples of accountability movements or events in the recent past. Accountability is now expected of all institutions. It is a household word the world over.

The accountability discussion has both internal and external dimensions. While some survey data address accountability interests and demands within school districts, other information is more relevant to public image or confidence in schools generally.

The Press for Internal Accountability

Several parts of the 1982 survey provide insight into how internal accountability affects the life of superintendents. One example is the evaluation of superintendents' performance.

Three fourths of the superintendents reported that they have job descriptions. Of those who have them, roughly 60 percent say that they are evaluated according to those descriptions and 70 percent are evaluated annually.

The major reasons superintendents cite for this evaluation are "to provide periodic and systematic accountability"; "to help establish relevant performance goals"; and "to identify areas needing improvement." Since similar data were not collected in the past, trends are not yet discernible. It is possible that the numbers of superintendents evaluated formally will increase. "Evaluation of staff and administrators," another internal concern, ranked fifth among the issues and challenges of great or significant importance to superintendents in 1982. It was not included in the 1971 rankings.

The Press for External Accountability

Three issues or challenges which ranked in the top five in 1982 have significance for external accountability. They are "planning and goal setting," "assessing educational outcomes" and "accountability/credibility." Of these, only "assessing educational outcomes" was even identified in 1971 when it ranked eighth.

"Planning and goal setting" is surfacing more and more

within all governments and at all levels. The issue involves clarifying direction and might imply efficiency.

The prominence of "assessing educational outcomes" is not surprising given the growth in mandated, state-wide achievement testing programs, literacy testing and competency testing of other sorts. There is no evidence, fortunately, that superintendents feel unequal to this challenge. In response to questions about skills that would be needed in the future, no mention was made of skills in evaluation or testing, nor were there indications that professionals in this area would be needed on district administrative and supervisory staffs during the years ahead. School systems are apparently ready to meet the needs for assessing educational outcomes.

"Accountability/credibility," especially credibility, is linked to public expectations and public confidence in education. The high ranking given this issue is evidence of the importance superintendents attribute to it and should be reassuring to board members and other citizens.

School district leaders, superintendents and board members, challenged by shrinking resources and concerns about public confidence, may have to develop new ways of thinking about these problems, ways that will encompass their complexity and generate improved approaches to their solutions.

Part 3: Contrasts

Many contrasts emerge from the 1982 data. A few, because of their level of interest and statistical significance, stand out.

Superintendents from Districts of Different Sizes

Some of the differences between and among superintendents from districts of varying size can be expected. For example, superintendents in larger districts are generally older but have spent fewer years in classroom teaching than those in smaller districts. They spend longer hours and more evenings and weekends working at their jobs. Many large district superintendents gained most of their experience in large systems. Minorities are more often found in districts of more than 3,000 enrollment and are recruited more vigorously in these districts.

Career patterns involve **teacher to principal to central office** in districts of more than 3,000 student enrollment; in smaller ones, the steps are usually **teacher to principal to superintendent.**

"If you had to do it all over again, would you choose a career as school superintendent?" The larger the district, the fewer the number of superintendents who would choose another occupation or profession outside of education. Larger district superintendents cited their reasons for leav-

ing their previous positions as a change of location and the type of new district they were entering. Small district superintendents more often said they left their previous positions because of conflict with their boards, the prospect of being fired or actually being fired.

The composition of school boards varies according to district size. There are more female board members in large districts, fewer in smaller districts. Similarly, the percentage of appointed school boards is much higher in larger districts than in small. Superintendent evaluation procedures are more formal, the larger the district, and less formal in smaller districts. Parent involvement in planning and advisory capacities is also greater in large districts.

The contrast in average levels of preparation are vastly different, but predictably so. Percentages of doctorates by size of local district are:

- Group A (25,000 or more pupils) 76.6 percent
- Group B (3,000 to 24,999 pupils) 62.6 percent
- Group C (300 to 2,999 pupils) 27.5 percent
- Group D (fewer than 300 pupils) 11.6 percent

Superintendents' appraisals of their graduate programs are of interest to those in higher education. (See Table 30.)

Table 30
Ratings of Graduate Programs in Educational Administration (National Weighted Profile)

Size of District	Excellent/Good (in percents)	Fair/Poor
Group A (25,000 or more pupils)	79.2	20.7
Group B (3,000 to 24,999 pupils)	81.1	18.6
Group C (300 to 2,999 pupils)	69.9	29.3
Group D (Less than 300 pupils)	61.2	37.8

Superintendents of larger districts hold educational research in higher regard than those from smaller districts, and found courses in administrative theory, philosophy of education, research methods and systems analysis to be

more useful. Smaller district superintendents placed more emphasis on school finance, school law and other day-to-day management-oriented work.

Women Superintendents

The number of women superintendents has changed little in 10 years. Of those who responded, the largest percentage was located in districts of 300 to 2,999 pupils. The percentage of female superintendents by district enrollment are:

- Group A 25,000 or more 3.5 percent
- Group B 3,000 to 24,999 pupils 20.2 percent
- Group C 300 to 2,999 pupils 52.6 percent
- Group D less than 300 pupils 23.7 percent

These figures show that more than half of all women superintendents are in districts with 300 to 2,999 students.

When compared with men, women superintendents:

- Have spent less of their lives in rural areas or small towns;
- Are slightly older;
- Are more often divorced or separated;
- Politically, more often consider themselves to be Democrats;
- Have parents with slightly higher levels of education.

Women superintendents have more elementary school experience, more years of teaching, earn about the same salaries and have experienced less employment outside education. They also:

- Have slightly higher levels of formal preparation;
- Began their graduate preparation at older ages;
- More often serve as supervisors in their first administrative position;
- Enter their first administrative positions at an older age;
- Are more often appointed to their present positions from outside the district.

Women superintendents also expressed stronger feelings about discriminatory hiring and promotional practices that limit career opportunities for women and minorities. Furthermore, they actively encourage and recruit women and minorities to enter administration to a greater extent than men. In addition, women superintendents:

- Have slightly higher records of AASA membership;
- Believe that the importance and influence of the superintendency is increasing;
- Think less well of their graduate preparation;
- See more usefulness in educational research;
- Have slightly less experience with strikes;
- Express slightly higher levels of fulfillment;
- Report similar levels of stress;
- Are somewhat less likely to remain in the superintendency until retirement age;
- Are most concerned about financial issues.

Intermediate Unit Superintendents

Intermediate unit superintendents were a part of the study of the superintendency for the first time in 1982. This category includes such districts as county units, joint vocational schools and those with titles such as the Boards of Cooperating Educational Services (BOCES). Although there are some similarities as well as distinctions among the units in this category, they are reported as one classification. The intermediate unit executives are similar to general superintendents in most respects. Therefore, only a few comparisions are included in this report.

In terms of personal characteristics, career data and professional activity, these contrasts appear between Intermediate Unit and other superintendents. The intermediate unit executives are:

- Approximately four years older;
- More rural and small town in their backgrounds;
- Politically, more likely to consider themselves Republicans;
- Are less likely to have been athletic coaches;
- Paid somewhat lower salaries;
- Less likely to serve their entire career in one district;
- Likely to work shorter hours, fewer evenings and weekends;
- Less likely to be AASA members;
- Less active in the recruitment of minorities and women into administration;
- Less likely to say that they would want to be superinten-

dent if they had to choose an occupation or profession again.

In other respects, Intermediate Unit Superintendents:

- Have fewer doctorates.
- Are more likely to continue in the supertendency until retirement;
- Reflect less stress in their positions;
- Report less self fulfillment.

Through the Years

Six surveys, spanning 60 years, offer other significant comparative data. Each survey team has modified the survey instruments over the years. As a result, fewer comparisions are possible than current researchers may like. (See Table 31 for a few comparisons.)

Table 31
Selected Comparisons from Six Superintendent Surveys

	1923*	1933*	1951*	1960	1971**	1982***
Median age	43.1	44.0	49.0	51.8	48.1	48.7
Entering the superintendency directly form the principalship	77.2%	NA	31.6%	29.4%	60.8%	43.0%
Entered superintendency directly from teaching	9.3%	NA	16.0%	4.6%	14.1%	8.8%
Median salary (current)	$3,390	$4,050	$6,804	$10,733	$17,310	$31,665
Median years experience as a superintendent	9.78	10.0	8.9	7.7	9.3	7.6
Percent female	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	1.2%
Median years of superintendents' contract	1.86	NA	NA	NA	NA	2.6
Median age at first superintendency	NA	NA	37.1	35.6	36.2	34.4

*Data for 1923, 1933, and 1951 are reported for city-school superintendents from cities of 2,500 population or larger.

**1971 data does not include responses from districts with less than 300 pupils due to the small rate of return from those superintendents sampled. Data based on a National Weighted Profile.

***1982 data are based on a National Weighted Profile.

The age structure of superintendents has changed through the years. Those now serving as superintendents are 5½ years older than their 1923 predecessors and three years younger than superintendents were in 1960. The median age seems to have stabilized over the past 30 years.

The median age for entry into the first superintendency is at its lowest level since data have been collected. Even so. it has remained close to the mid-30s for many years. The percentage entering the superintendency directly from teaching has fluctuated. It was highest in 1951 (16.0 percent) and lowest in 1960 (4.6 percent), settling at 8.8 percent in 1982. The percent entering the superintendency directly from the principalship has a rather erratic history. In 1923, 77.2 percent followed that pattern; in 1982, it was 43 percent. Many teachers and principals from small, often rural, districts enter the superintendency directly.

Information about the median years of superintendents' contracts were collected only in 1923 and 1982. There is nearly one year difference, 1.86 years in 1923 compared with 2.6 years in 1982. The median number of years of service for superintendents has also varied. Median length of service was highest, 10 years, in 1933 and the lowest, 7.6 years, in 1982. Explanations of those variations are difficult, but they are undoubtedly related to many conditions in both the internal and external environments of school districts.

Salaries always attract the interest of superintendents and school board members. The median salary increased only $150 between 1923 and 1933. On the other hand, the median salary increased by more than $14,000, without controlling for inflation, between 1971 and 1982. The recent growth in salaries is a reflection of inflation, higher levels of education and professional training and the growth of executive pay scales in both the private and the public sectors. The average salary reported in the AASA survey of members showed higher salaries. However, that study was not weighted to negate the effect of large districts. This study was weighted, thus giving equal weight to large and small districts.

Although data regarding the number of women in the superintendency have been collected in the last two surveys only, the picture is not reassuring. There has been only a slight increase in the number of female superintendents despite considerable publicity about the need for more women in this office and substantial increases in the number of

females in preparation programs.

Employment decisions of school boards should be monitored during the next few years to determine whether there are increases in the number of women and minorities employed as superintendents. The movement away from equity concerns reported earlier may continue to depress opportunities for highly qualified women and minorities to become superintendents.

Summary

The study of the American Superintendency is likely to be repeated in the early 1990s. What changes can reasonably be anticipated? What will the superintendency in the 1990s be like? Will there be fewer superintendents? Will they be more highly trained? Will the tensions between boards and superintendents become more severe? Will the financial problems have been alleviated?

Lacking an infallible crystal ball, any predictions must be understood as, at best, only predictions. They are the authors' approximations of what might be, subject to the usual limitations that ordinarily apply to such projections. With that caveat, it seems reasonable to suggest that:

- The level of formal education will be elevated and nearly 50 percent of all superintendents will have doctorates.
- Turnover rates are likely to remain at present levels, at least until more stability is achieved in finance, bargaining and board relationships.
- Tensions between boards and superintendents are likely to remain high.
- Crises in finance will not be resolved in the 1980s and will, therefore, linger into the 1990s.
- Many of our highly trained, effective superintendents may be drafted into other executive positions outside education.

- Equity issues, currently on the back burner, may be revived and assume new importance.
- More women and minorities will be chosen as superintendents raising the percentage of women somewhat above the current level.

The six themes described earlier are important representations of the American superintendency today. Furthermore, they should become the subject of general discussion and analysis among superintendents and other educational leaders at local, state, regional and national levels. There are implications for those in practice as well as for those who design and conduct preservice and inservice training programs. Similarly, there are implications for parents, other citizens and policymakers at all levels.

The only return expected on the investment in this study is the constructive benefit that might arise from its examination and the stimulation of fresh ideas about the challenges and issues that lie ahead for school superintendents.

Resources

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Other studies which will enhance *The Study of the American Superintendency 1982 ... Summary Report* and comprehensive report are being conducted by Clayton Dusek, a Worth McClure AASA Fellow, who is replicating the work done on Superintendents as "insiders" or "outsiders," by Richard Carlson, first completed in the 1960s, Judythe Hummel, who is analyzing in depth data regarding female superintendents and John Sonedecker, who is focusing research on the evaluation of Superintendents.

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